



ПРО ВІРҮ ГРЕКО-КАТОЛИЦЬКУ

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**ABOUT THE GREEK CATHOLIC
FAITH**

Віра і знання

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INTRODUCTION

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the Church of Christ. It received its name as a result of the fraternal union between the Kyivan Metropolia and the Roman See. This union was called the “Unia”, which in translation means a союз (soliuз), that is, a bond or alliance. It was a union between the sixtieth Metropolia of Kyiv of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Ukrainian Church moved toward this union for many years, and finally, in 1596, an interconfessional agreement was concluded, according to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, headed by the Metropolitan of Kyiv, entered into communion with the Roman Church as a distinct and self-governing entity. It received the name Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, that is, a Catholic Church of the Greek rite.

It retained the right to its own traditions and its own icons. It accepted several new dogmas, such as the Filioque and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, as well as the doctrine of purgatory, which are not acknowledged by the Orthodox. According to the protocols, the Union was concluded with certain reservations: the Orthodox Ukrainian

hierarchs set forth requirements to which the Roman See was to agree. There were thirty-three such conditions, which will be presented below. The title “Orthodox” remained in reference to their hierarchs, pastors, and faithful.¹

The Slavonic Greek rite was preserved, as were the feasts and the priestly and episcopal vestments that do not exist in the Roman Catholic Church. The old-style ecclesiastical calendar and other attributes were likewise retained.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church preserved its rites and traditions throughout more than four hundred years under the authority of the Roman Pontiff. Through its very existence, the Ukrainian Church has demonstrated that it is a distinct Eastern branch of the Roman Church, and that there can be no question of the Roman Church absorbing the Kyivan Church.

It numbers more than seven million faithful, with its own metropolias, eparchies, and parishes almost throughout the entire world. The Major Archbishop, following the construction of the Patriarchal Cathedral, has his seat in the capital of the Ukrainian state—Kyiv.

¹ After the Union, “Orthodox” refers to those who are “right-believing.” This is the official interpretation for the UGCC per the Decisions of the Lviv Council of 1891

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church endured many sufferings and persecutions as a result of hostility, including open persecution by the Soviet state and by some of its Orthodox brethren.

Yet it stood courageously in this fierce struggle, which testifies to its divine foundation. For Christ Himself said: “I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Had such persecutions befallen an institution not established by God, it would not have endured such a struggle and would have ceased to exist.

In this brief work, we shall attempt to acquaint our readers and faithful, in summary form, with the history of the origin of the Church of Christ in general and of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in particular. For this reason, we shall begin at the very beginning—from the birth of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.



FROM THE SACRED HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Nativity of the Holy Virgin Mary

When the time was drawing near for the Savior of the world to be born, there lived in the Galilean town of Nazareth a descendant of King David, Joachim, with his wife Anna. Both were devout people who had reached advanced age, yet they had no children. Even in their old age they did not cease to pray fervently to God that He might grant them a child, and they made a vow: if their desire were fulfilled, they would dedicate the child to the Temple for the service of God.

God heard the prayer of the righteous. A daughter was born to them, and they named her Mary. The birth of Mary brought joy not only to her parents but to all people, for she had been chosen by God to become the Mother of the Savior of the world.

The Entrance of the Holy Virgin Mary into the Temple

When the Virgin Mary reached the age of three, Joachim and Anna, in accordance with their vow, brought her to the Temple

in Jerusalem. Little Mary was accompanied to the Temple by her companions carrying lighted candles, and they sang sacred hymns.

The three-year-old Mary herself ascended the steps of the Temple. There she was met by the high priest Zechariah, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, led her into the Holy of Holies, where even he was permitted to enter only once a year. The Virgin Mary lived in the Temple for eleven years. There, removed from the world, she often and fervently prayed, diligently read the Word of God, devoted herself to handiwork, and strictly observed fasting.

The Spirit of God and the holy angels continually guarded the divine Maiden.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary in the House of Joseph

When the Virgin Mary reached the age of fourteen, according to the law she was to return to her parents or be given in marriage. Mary did not wish to marry, for she had vowed to remain a virgin forever, and her parents had already died. Therefore, it was decided to entrust the Virgin Mary to the care of her relative, the elder Joseph, who lived in Nazareth and was a

carpenter. In Joseph's house, Mary led the same modest and secluded life as she had in the Temple.

The Annunciation to the Most Holy Virgin Mary

One day the Virgin Mary was reading the sacred book of the prophet Isaiah. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and said: "Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women! You shall bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus."

The Virgin Mary replied: "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

The Archangel answered her: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; therefore the One who is to be born will be holy and shall be called the Son of God."

The gentle Mary humbly responded: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to the will of God." Then the Archangel departed from her. The Church commemorates this event, and the feast is called the Annunciation—that is, the good and joyful tidings.

The Nativity of Jesus Christ

When the time came for the Savior of the world to be born, God Himself descended to the earth and became man, so that man might ascend to Heaven and become united with God.

At that time the Jewish land was under Roman rule. The Roman emperor ordered a census of all his subjects, and for this purpose each person was to register in his native city.

Joseph and Mary lived in the city of Nazareth, but they were originally from Bethlehem. Therefore, they went there to be registered.

When the holy travelers arrived in the city, they could not find any lodging where they might stay. Joseph and Mary were forced to seek shelter, and they found it in a cave near the town, where in bad weather the shepherds of Bethlehem would drive their flocks.

In that cave the Savior of the world was born of the Virgin. Mary wrapped the divine Child in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, where animals are fed.

Troparion of the Nativity of Christ

“Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it, those who worshiped the stars were taught by a star to worship You, the Sun of righteousness, and to know You, the Savior from on high. O Lord, glory to You.”

The Adoration of the Bethlehem Shepherds

The shepherds of Bethlehem were the first to learn of the birth of the Savior. That night an angel appeared to them. At first the shepherds were afraid, but he reassured them and said: “Do not be afraid, for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be not only for you, but for all people: Christ God, the Savior of the world, is born. And this shall be a sign for you: you will find the Infant lying in a manger in a cave.”

As soon as he had spoken these words, a multitude of angels appeared in the sky. They began to sing a hymn of praise to God: “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good will among men.” After this, the shepherds went to the cave to worship the divine Child.

The Presentation of the Lord

On the fortieth day, as required by the Jewish law, the Virgin Mary came with the Infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer Him to God as the firstborn, presenting the prescribed redemption and a thanksgiving sacrifice for herself.

The Virgin Mary was poor and offered two doves in sacrifice. In the Temple they were met by the righteous elder Simeon, to whom God had promised that his life would be prolonged until he had seen the Savior. Simeon came to the Temple and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognized in the Infant the promised Savior of the world.

Taking Jesus Christ into his arms, the elder said:

“Now, O Master, according to Your word, You let Your servant depart in peace (that is, from this life to the life beyond), for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared for all people—a light for the enlightenment of the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”

“Now I can die in peace, for with my own eyes I have seen the Savior...”

In the Temple there was also an eighty-four-year-old prophetess, Anna. She glorified the Lord and spoke of Him to all who were awaiting the coming of the Savior.

The Adoration of the Magi

Some time later, the Magi, or wise men from the East (who studied the stars), came to worship Jesus Christ. They had noticed an extraordinary star rising in the East and concluded that its appearance signified the birth of the long-awaited Savior of the world. Since the Jewish prophets had foretold the coming of the Savior, the Magi went to Judea to worship Him.

When they arrived in Jerusalem and learned that, according to the prophecies, the Savior was to be born in Bethlehem, they set out for that city. The wondrous star appeared again and went before them, as though showing them the way. In Bethlehem it stopped above the house where the newborn Jesus was staying.

The Magi entered the house, worshiped the divine Child, and offered Him gifts: gold as to a King, frankincense (fragrant incense) as to God, and myrrh (a spice used in burial) as to a Man who was to die. Afterward, they returned to their own country.

John the Baptist

The prophet Malachi foretold that before the coming of the Savior, a great prophet would appear. He would prepare the people to receive the Savior. This prophet was John, the son of the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth.

John lived in the wilderness and led a strict life of fasting and asceticism. When he reached the age of thirty, God sent him to the River Jordan to teach and prepare the people for the coming of the Savior.

He said to the people: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand”—that is, the Savior would soon come.

People from everywhere came to hear the great prophet, and those who believed his words and repented of their sins were baptized by him in the River Jordan. For this reason, he was called the Baptist.

The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was thirty years old. In obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father, He went from the city of Nazareth to the River Jordan to be baptized by John.

John at first refused and said: “I am not worthy to baptize You.” But Jesus said to him: “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill the will of My Father.” Then John obeyed and baptized Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and a voice from heaven was heard—the voice of God the Father: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

In remembrance of this event, the Church established a feast called the Baptism of the Lord, also known as Theophany, since God first revealed Himself in three Persons: God the Father spoke, God the Son was baptized, and God the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. On this feast, the blessing of water is performed in all churches.

Troparion of the Baptism of the Lord

“When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Holy Trinity was made manifest: for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You His beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truth of His word. O Christ God, who have appeared and enlightened the world, glory to You.”

The Preaching of Jesus Christ

After His baptism, the Lord Jesus Christ went throughout cities and villages, preaching to the people that He is the promised Savior of the world and that salvation can be attained only through faith and life in Him: “No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The path to salvation begins with repentance—that is, with the recognition of one’s former sinfulness and the firm resolve to abandon one’s former life. The entire life of a Christian is an ascetic struggle: a constant battle against passions, sinful habits, and attachments.

Salvation is possible only in the Church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. In the sacraments, in the divine services,

and in prayers, grace is given, which sanctifies the person, grants strength for spiritual struggle, and heals sins.

The goal of life, of this entire spiritual struggle, is union with God Himself. For in Him alone is eternal life; apart from Him is eternal death.

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit (the humble), for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn (for their sins), for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (who desire to be justified before God), for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.

The Transfiguration of the Lord

Shortly before His suffering, Jesus Christ took with Him His disciples—Peter, James, and John—and went up with them to Mount Tabor. There, while He was praying, His face suddenly shone like the sun, and His garments became white as snow.

Two prophets, Moses and Elijah, appeared to Him and spoke with Him about His forthcoming sufferings.

Seeing the Lord in this extraordinary radiance—that is, beholding the glory of His divinity—the Apostle Peter said: “Lord, it is good for us to be here! If You wish, we will make three tents: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

As soon as Peter had spoken, they were overshadowed by a cloud, and the voice of God the Father was heard: “This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.”

The disciples, filled with fear, fell to the ground and remained there until the Lord raised them up. When they stood up, they saw Jesus Christ in His usual appearance.

On this feast, fruits are blessed in the church.

The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem

Six days before the Jewish Passover, Jesus Christ made His solemn entry into Jerusalem. Passing over the Mount of Olives on the road from Bethany, He sent two of His disciples to bring Him a donkey and its colt from a nearby village. When the disciples brought them and laid their garments upon them, Jesus sat on the colt and went toward Jerusalem.

Great crowds of people followed the Lord and also came out to meet Him along the road. Filled with joy and gratitude, they cried out: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Many spread their garments on the road, while others cut down palm branches and cast them before Him. Even the children, following the example of their parents, greeted the Lord with the words: “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

Thus the Lord, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, entered Jerusalem and went directly to the Temple. There He drove out those who were buying and selling sacrificial animals, saying to them: “Why have you made the house of prayer into a place of trade?”

The Church celebrates the solemn Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem one week before Pascha. During the vigil service, after the reading of the Gospel, willow branches are blessed and distributed to the faithful. For this reason, the feast is called Palm Sunday, or Willow Sunday.

The Mystical Supper

On Thursday, the day before His sufferings, Jesus Christ gathered with His disciples in a house and there established the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and, giving it to His disciples, said: “Take, eat; this is My Body, which is broken for you for the remission of sins.” Then He took a cup of wine and, giving it to them, said: “Drink of it, all of you; this is My Blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins.”

These words mean that under the appearance of bread and wine, the Savior gave His disciples that same Body and that same Blood which, on the following day, He would offer to suffering and death for our sins. How this bread and wine became the Body and Blood of the Lord is a mystery, incomprehensible even to the angels; therefore it is called a “sacrament.”

After giving Communion to the apostles, the Lord said: “Do this in remembrance of Me,” that is, He commanded them to continue performing this sacrament. It is celebrated among us to this day and will be celebrated until the end of the age in the divine service called the Liturgy.

The Trial, Suffering, and Death of Jesus Christ

After the Mystical Supper, the Lord Jesus Christ withdrew at night to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. That same night, His enemies seized Him, bound Him, and brought Him before the high priests for judgment. Though He had committed no wrongdoing, the Jews accused Him of calling Himself the Son of God, and at their insistence Pilate, the governor of Judea, condemned Him to death.

On Friday at noon, the soldiers led Jesus Christ to Mount Golgotha and crucified Him on a cross between two criminals. Jesus endured all His sufferings patiently: He not only did not complain against His enemies, but on the contrary, He prayed for them. After three hours of suffering, He died on the cross. At that moment, the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, and many of the dead were raised.

Seeing these signs, the people said: “Truly, this Man was the Son of God.”

It was here, on the cross, that the mystery of the salvation of the human race was accomplished.

The Resurrection of Christ

On Friday evening, two secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, buried the body of the Lord Jesus Christ in Joseph's garden, in a new tomb cut in the rock. The Jewish leaders stationed soldiers to guard the tomb. After two days, on the third day, the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

An angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. His face shone like the sun, and his garments were white as snow. When the soldiers saw the angel

and the empty tomb, they fell to the ground in fear. Some ran to their leaders and reported what they had seen. The leaders bribed the soldiers and ordered them to say that Christ had not risen, but that His disciples came by night while they were asleep and stole His body. The soldiers did as they were told.

Meanwhile, after the guards fled in terror, the myrrh-bearing women came to the Lord's tomb to anoint His body with spices. The angel who appeared near the tomb showed them that it was empty, told them of Christ's Resurrection, and sent them to announce it to the apostles, which they did.

Afterward, the Lord Himself appeared to the myrrh-bearing women and several times to the apostles. He showed them His wounds, ate before them, and spoke with them, thus convincing them of His Resurrection. In appearing to His disciples, the Lord strengthened them and revealed to them the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Troparion of Pascha

**“Christ is risen from the dead,
by death He trampled death,
and to those in the tombs He granted life.”**

The Ascension of the Lord

On the fortieth day after His Resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared for the last time to His disciples in Jerusalem and went with them to the Mount of Olives. Along the way, as He was taking leave of them, He promised to send the Holy Spirit and commanded them to go into the world and preach about Him to all people.

When they reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus Christ began to bless His disciples, and at that very moment He began to ascend higher and higher, until finally a cloud received their Divine Teacher out of their sight. The disciples stood for a long time gazing into heaven. Then two angels appeared to them and said that Jesus Christ had ascended from them into heaven. The disciples worshiped the Lord and returned to Jerusalem to await the promised Holy Spirit.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

On the tenth day after the Lord's Ascension, all the disciples, together with the Mother of God, were praying in the upper room on Mount Zion, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. At the third hour of the morning (that is, about nine o'clock),

there suddenly came a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and the apostles saw above their heads something like tongues of fire.

This was the descent of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to send. The apostles then understood fully the teaching of Christ; the meaning of the Incarnation and the saving sacrifice on the Cross became clear to them. Moreover, they received extraordinary power to perform miracles and the ability to speak in various languages.

The noise drew many people to the upper room. The Apostle Peter went out to them and proclaimed that the crucified Jesus had risen and ascended into heaven, and that He had sent the Holy Spirit to them, the apostles. Peter's preaching affected the people so deeply that about three thousand believed and were baptized that very day. Thus were laid the foundations of the Church of Christ.

After this, the apostles went forth to different countries of the world, preaching about Jesus Christ. Everywhere they established churches from among those who believed in Him and imparted the Holy Spirit to them.

The Meaning of the Church

The Church is the divinely established community of Christians united by one faith, a sacred hierarchy, and the sacraments.

The Persecution of Christians by the Jews.

The Holy Protomartyr Stephen

The glory, victories, and rapid spread of Christianity aroused fear and hatred among the Jewish leaders. They began to persecute the Christians, inciting the common people against them and accusing them before the Roman authorities. The Jews seized Christians, cast them into prison, and put them to death.

The first to suffer in Jerusalem was the holy Archdeacon Stephen, called the Protomartyr for his preaching about the Savior. The Jews led him outside the city and stoned him. As he was being stoned, he prayed, saying: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And then, with the words, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them,” he died.

The killing of Saint Stephen and many other believers did not weaken the Christian faith; on the contrary, it further contributed to its spread. Christians who had been in Jerusalem

were scattered throughout Judea, Samaria, and other lands, and wherever they went, they preached about the Lord and His teaching.

No power in the world could halt the victorious progress of Christianity, for the faith of Christ is the true faith, the teaching of Christ is divine teaching, and life according to His faith and doctrine is holy life—the Kingdom of God. The believers were strengthened by the Heavenly Father; the Savior was with them; and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, consoled them.

The Conversion of Saul (Paul)

When the holy Protomartyr Stephen was being stoned, a young man named Saul, who was guarding the garments of those who were stoning Stephen, approved of the killing. He was an opponent of the Christians and took part in persecuting them, not only in his own homeland but also by obtaining permission to go to the Syrian city of Damascus to search for them and bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment.

As Saul was traveling to Damascus and drawing near to the city, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. He fell to the

ground and heard a voice saying: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” The Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” Trembling, Saul said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” The Lord answered, “Rise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

When Saul rose from the ground, his eyes were open, but he could see nothing. His companions took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. There he spent three days in prayer, neither eating nor drinking.

At that time in Damascus there was one of the Seventy Apostles named Ananias. The Lord commanded him to go to the house where Saul was staying, lay his hands upon him, and restore his sight. Ananias came to Saul, and when he laid his hands upon him, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes. He regained his sight and immediately received Holy Baptism from Ananias (Saul’s baptism took place around the year 37 A.D.). In baptism Saul received the name Paul and became a devoted preacher of the Christian faith.

The Apostle Paul—the Apostle to the Gentiles—wrote fourteen epistles preserved in the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament. He ended his life by martyrdom. As a Roman citizen, he was

beheaded. For his great apostolic labors, the Church calls him, together with the Apostle Peter, a Chief of the Apostles.

The Dormition of the Mother of God

The Mother of God lived on earth for about sixty-four years. After the Crucifixion of the Lord, she lived in Jerusalem in the house of the Apostle John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, who cared for her as his own mother.

One day, in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel appeared to the Mother of God and announced that in three days the time of her departure would come. She began to prepare for death, yet she grieved deeply that she could not bid farewell to the apostles, who at that time were preaching the teaching of Jesus Christ in various lands. By the command of God, all the apostles—except Thomas—were miraculously gathered in Jerusalem.

The Mother of God took leave of them and died so peacefully that it seemed as though she had fallen asleep; therefore her death is called the Dormition. At the moment of her passing, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared and received her most

pure soul (in icons it is depicted as an infant), while the apostles buried her body in a tomb where the elder Joseph had been laid.

On the third day afterward, the Apostle Thomas arrived and wished to venerate her body. However, her body was not found in the tomb; it had been taken up into heaven. The apostles were confirmed in this when the Mother of God appeared to them in the air, surrounded by angels, and said: “Rejoice! I will always pray to my Son, your God, for you.”

The Cessation of Persecutions

The persecutions against the Church of Christ continued for three hundred years. Hundreds and thousands of the faithful, defending their faith in the crucified Lord, suffered martyrdom. The persecutions of Christians came to an end at the beginning of the fourth century, when in the year 313 Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor, issued a decree forbidding the persecution of Christians and permitting them openly to profess their faith.

The Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord

Constantine the Great was the first of the pagan emperors to embrace the Christian faith. He had a pious mother, Queen Helena. She desired to travel to Palestine to find the Cross upon which Jesus Christ had been crucified. The Lord blessed her intention, and, guided by an elderly Jew, she discovered in the ground on Mount Golgotha three crosses.

To determine which one was truly the Cross of Christ, the queen and the clergy began placing them one by one upon a deceased man who was being carried past them at that moment. When the Cross of Christ was laid upon him, the dead man came back to life. Soon many Christians from the surrounding area gathered to witness the miracle and to venerate the Cross of the Lord.

Then Patriarch Macarius, so that all might see it, lifted up—exalted—the Holy Cross before the people. For this reason, the feast is called the “Exaltation.”



THE BAPTISM OF RUS'

Our homeland, Rus', became a Christian land almost one thousand years after the coming of the Savior into the world. Until that time, the people of Rus' worshiped idols and were pagans. The principal idols were the sun (Dazhboh) and thunder with lightning (Perun). Besides these, there were many other lesser idols—patrons of the household, fields, water, forests, and the like. In the lives of our pagan ancestors there were many superstitions, false beliefs, and cruel customs; even human sacrifices occurred.

According to tradition, the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called preached the Gospel in Scythia—that is, in the lands that later became Ukraine, from which Rus' was formed. Ascending the hills of Kyiv, he erected a wooden cross there and foretold that in this land the true Christian faith would flourish.

Saint Andrew came to the land of Rus' from south to north: from the Kyiv hills to Novgorod, and even to the island of Valaam. Recent studies attest to this tradition.

According to tradition, the first princes of Rus' to receive Baptism were the Kyivan princes Askold and Dir (867). Almost one hundred years later, the wise Princess Olga, seeing the pure life of the Christians in Kyiv, became convinced of the truth of their faith and received Holy Baptism (957). She traveled with a great retinue to Byzantium and received Baptism from the Patriarch of Constantinople himself, taking the name Helena. Upon returning home, she urged her son Sviatoslav to accept Christianity, but he, being a stern warrior by temperament, refused.

God willed that the land of Rus' be enlightened with Christianity through Prince Volodymyr, the grandson of Olga. At first Volodymyr was a zealous pagan and led an impious life. During his reign, two Christians, Theodore and his son John, were sacrificed to idols and thus became the first martyrs in Rus'.

Soon, however, Volodymyr recognized the futility of paganism and began to seek a better faith. When it became known that the prince of Rus' was searching for another religion, various preachers came to him—Muslims, Jews, Germans, and Greeks—each proposing his own faith. The strongest impression upon Volodymyr was made by a Greek preacher who, at the end of his discourse, showed him an image of the Last

Judgment. Volodymyr said, “It is good for those righteous ones on the right side.” “Be baptized, and you will be among them,” replied the preacher.

After long deliberation, the prince received Baptism from Greek priests and married the Greek princess Anna. This took place in the year 988.

First, Volodymyr urged his twelve sons to be baptized, and they received Baptism. Many boyars followed them. Finally, Volodymyr ordered all the inhabitants of Kyiv to come on an appointed day to the River Dnipro. There, in the presence of the prince, the clergy performed the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

From Kyiv, with God’s help, the Christian faith quickly spread and was established throughout the land of Rus’. The people of Rus’ embraced the Christian faith wholeheartedly, and it brought with it spiritual enlightenment: literacy, the founding of monasteries and schools, and the development of various forms of art.

The Break with Constantinople and the Union with Rome

As mentioned above, Kyivan Rus' was baptized according to the Greek rite. When the schism occurred in the Church in 1054, the Kyivan Church remained for a long time within the Eastern Church and was part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as its sixtieth Metropolia. This continued until 1596, when the Ukrainian Orthodox Church definitively withdrew from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and entered into union with the Roman See.

It must be said that this union was deliberate and carefully considered. It was preceded by many years of negotiations.

In 1594, a memorandum was drafted, serving as a working directive for the representatives of the Kyivan Synod who went to discuss the question of union with King Sigismund III. It was signed by Ipatii Potii, Bishop of Volodymyr and Brest, as well as by Bishops Terletskyi, Kopystenskyi, Balaban, and Zboryiskyi.

It is worth quoting the words of the hierarchs in detail. They stated first of all that they, the bishops, had observed among their senior patriarchs disorder and negligence in their care for the Churches of God and for the sacred law, as well as their own subjugation. They lamented how the number of patriarchs had

increased from four to eight, how they conducted their lives in their capitals, how they undermined one another, and how they neglected the chief cathedral Churches of God. When these patriarchs came to them, they conducted no disputations with those of other faiths, nor did they provide explanations of Holy Scripture—even when asked—caring more for their own benefit than for salvation, gathering treasures for themselves and contending with one another in pagan lands, making this the substance of their lives.

Further in the text, the Ruthenian bishops set forth the conditions under which union might be concluded. They asked the king to guarantee the inviolability of their churches and eparchies, their liturgy, rite, customs, and the preservation of the ecclesiastical calendar, so that in nothing and by no one would these be altered for all time.

In 1596, in accordance with this memorandum, the Holy Union was signed, by which the Ukrainian hierarchs recognized the primacy of the Pope. In separating from Constantinople and the East, the Ukrainian Church broke its direct living ties with the tradition that had formed its foundation. Instead, a rapprochement with the Latin West began.

Separated from the East, the Church became more vulnerable in relation to the West and thus passively submitted to the influence of a religious culture that did not always coincide with its own traditions. However, one should not exaggerate the extent of the Latinization of the Ukrainian Church—it was never profound.

The attitude of the Polish state toward the Union was ambiguous. The very fact that the Ukrainian Church belonged to the Catholic Church required its support. Yet Poland never abandoned the conviction that the Union was, at best, merely a compromise on the path toward converting Orthodox Ruthenians into Latin Poles.

For the Polish Church, it was even more difficult to renounce the hope that the Union would eventually lead to the adoption of the Latin rite. It is hard to part with illusions; once they fade, what remains is bitter disappointment. At best there was indifference, and more often open hostility—such was the attitude toward the Uniate Church.

Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky

Roman-Alexander-Maria Count Sheptytsky, who as a Basilian monk took the name Andrey, became Archbishop and Metropolitan of Lviv and Halych of the Greek Catholic rite, and was a Doctor of Law, Philosophy, and Theology.

He was born on July 29, 1865, in Prylbichi in Eastern Galicia and died on November 1, 1944, in Lviv.

From his youth, Metropolitan Sheptytsky showed an inclination toward the priestly vocation. Even while serving in the Austrian army, he almost never missed the Divine Services, although he had already suffered from scarlet fever with complications (inflammation of the joints). As a result, he developed chronic rheumatism, which later confined him to a chair. Because of his poor health, he had to leave military service, though it is doubtful that illness alone determined his choice of the priestly path.

The idea of religious unity of his people and their ancestors captivated Andrey from his youth. The path he chose as Metropolitan led through the renewal and expansion of the Union, which did not correspond to the interests of Orthodoxy or of Russia.

He entered the Basilian Order on July 1, 1888, and made his first monastic vows on August 13, 1889. In 1899, he was consecrated Bishop of Stanislaviv. At that time, he introduced organizational changes aimed at renewing the Greek Catholic Church. After the death of Metropolitan Julian, the Vatican (under Pope Leo XIII) appointed Andrey Sheptytsky as Metropolitan of Halych and Lviv.

The Metropolitan began his political activity early, though he became a deputy to the Galician Sejm only in 1901. From 1903 to 1914, he was a member of the House of Lords in Vienna. In December 1939, he consecrated Father Josyf Slipyj as bishop and appointed him as his successor.



The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the Catacombs (1946–1989)

The Stalinist repressions against the Greek Catholic Church, which also extended to Ukrainian-populated territories of Poland and Czechoslovakia, could not destroy or sever the symbiotic bond between Greek Catholicism and the national consciousness of Ukrainians in Galicia and Transcarpathia. The atheistic regime openly used force to impose the Russian Orthodox Church upon Greek Catholics. In doing so, it deprived that Church of legitimacy in the eyes of believers and made it even more dependent upon state protection against the underground Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church endured terrible persecutions during the years of Stalin's rule. The Church was deprived of its hierarchy and clergy, who bore their cross in Moscow's labor camps. The death of Stalin in March 1953, the struggle for power in the Kremlin, and Khrushchev's campaign of de-Stalinization significantly affected the situation of the Church.

After the dictator's death, by order of Beria in early 1953, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj was brought from Mordovia to

Moscow. Beria sought support in his struggle for power in Ukraine and therefore initiated opposition to Russification in Western Ukraine. His emissaries began secret negotiations with Slipyj concerning the normalization of Soviet relations with the Vatican and the legalization of the Greek Catholic Church. These negotiations were abruptly terminated by Beria's arrest.

After Slipyj rejected repeated proposals from the KGB to renounce his position in exchange for freedom and high rank in the Russian Orthodox Church, he was again sentenced—without witnesses—to administrative exile in a home for the disabled in the Krasnoyarsk region, where he remained semi-free until his renewed arrest in 1958.

Meanwhile, as a result of Khrushchev's reforms of 1955–1956, several hundred Greek Catholic priests and monks who had survived returned from exile to Western Ukraine. Among them were two bishops, Mykola Charnetskyi and Ivan Letyshyevskyi, who secretly carried out their episcopal duties. From 1957, the exiled Metropolitan Slipyj faced intensified administrative persecution. He was taken to Kyiv and in 1959 sentenced to seven years of forced labor.

The Metropolitan's release in 1963, by order of Khrushchev, was a direct consequence of renewed friendly relations between the Vatican and Moscow.

The persecution of the Church continued until the late 1980s. In early August 1987, a small group of Ukrainian Catholic clergy, monks, and laity—including Bishop Pavlo Vasylyk—announced that they were emerging from the underground and called upon the Pope to support the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the USSR by all possible means.

Soon other Ukrainian hierarchs joined this appeal: Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk and his auxiliary Bishop Philemon Kurchaba in Lviv, Bishop Sofron Dmyterko in Ivano-Frankivsk, and Bishop Ivan Margitych in Transcarpathia.



THE SACRAMENTS OF OUR CHURCH

What Are the Sacraments

On the day of Holy Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, and this became the day of the founding of the Holy Church—the community of people who believe in Christ and live in Him. The Savior likened the life of a Christian in the Church to the life of a branch on a tree. Just as a branch lives only when it is joined to the trunk, so a Christian is spiritually alive only when he remains inseparably united with Christ.

For this reason, the Church is truly the Body of Christ in the fullest sense of the word. The Holy Church is, as it were, God's family on earth. She preserves within herself and transmits to those who enter her the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were received by the apostles. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we can accomplish nothing good on our own. Therefore, at all the principal moments of our life, the Church especially prays that God may grant us the grace of the Holy Spirit.

These church prayers and sacred actions, in which under the visible actions of the priest upon a person, through the prayer of the Church, the power of the Holy Spirit acts invisibly and mysteriously, are called sacraments.

In the life of the Church, the following sacraments are distinguished:

- 1. Baptism**
- 2. Chrismation**
- 3. Holy Communion, or the Eucharist**
- 4. Repentance (Confession)**
- 5. Holy Orders**
- 6. Marriage**
- 7. Anointing of the Sick**

In addition, there are several rites called sacramentals, such as the blessing of water, monastic tonsure, and others, in which the grace of the Holy Spirit is likewise invoked.

On Baptism

The first sacrament in the life of a Christian is Baptism. In it, the Holy Spirit grants us new, spiritual life. Only after the sacrament of Baptism do we become Christians. For this reason, Baptism is administered as early as possible, usually to very young children.

During the celebration of this sacrament, the godparents stand with the infant being baptized beside a large vessel of water—the font—holding lighted candles. They publicly profess their faith by reciting the Creed, renounce the devil and all his works, and promise to strive to fulfill God’s commandments.

Then the priest blesses the water and immerses the infant in it three times, saying: “The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

On Chrismation

The new life received in Baptism must be a life in the Holy Spirit—a holy life. Such a life requires constant spiritual effort. For this, spiritual strength is needed. A Christian receives this strength in the sacrament of Chrismation.

Usually this sacrament is administered to the infant together with Baptism. The priest anoints the newly baptized child with a special oil, consecrated by a bishop—holy chrism—on the forehead, eyes, ears, mouth, nostrils, chest, hands, and feet, saying: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Through this sacrament, the Holy Spirit dwells in the soul and body of the newly baptized, sanctifies all his faculties, and grants him the spiritual strength necessary for the new life.

After Baptism and Chrismation, the infant is carried three times around the font following the priest. This signifies that the new member has been united to the Church forever.

On Holy Communion

Just as the body dies if it remains too long without natural food, so the soul dies if it remains too long without spiritual nourishment. This spiritual food, without which Christian life is impossible, we receive in the sacrament of Holy Communion, or the Eucharist. This sacrament is celebrated during the Divine Liturgy.

In it, bread and wine are offered in sacrifice to the Lord. They are blessed and, through the action of the Holy Spirit, become

the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The priest then gives these Holy Gifts to the faithful, saying: “The servant of God (name) partakes of the precious and holy Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for life everlasting.”

This is Holy Communion. In receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We must approach the Holy Chalice with great reverence and care. When the priest opens the Royal Doors and brings out the Chalice, saying, “With the fear of God and with faith draw near,” the communicants make a full bow to the ground. They then repeat after the priest the prayer before Communion and approach the Chalice without making the sign of the cross, so as not to accidentally strike it, but instead folding their hands upon their chest.

After receiving Communion, we kiss the Chalice and step aside. Before Communion, nothing may be eaten or drunk. After Communion, at the end of the Liturgy, communicants either listen to or read at home special prayers of thanksgiving.

The Church teaches us to receive Communion on all the Twelve Great Feasts, on one’s patronal feast (Name Day), on Great

Thursday and Pascha, and, if possible, even more frequently—especially on Sundays.

On Repentance

In order to receive Holy Communion worthily—so that the Holy Mysteries may strengthen us in holy living—it is necessary that we sincerely desire to avoid sin and that we feel sorrow for the sins we have already committed.

How are we to repent of these sins? For this purpose the sacrament of Repentance, or Confession, has been established.

In preparing for this sacrament, we should strive to recall everything by which we have sinned against God, against our neighbor, and against ourselves. We must also ask forgiveness from all whom we have offended. Prayer books contain special prayers for those preparing for confession, including the Penitential Canon.

The one who repents must understand that the priest is only a witness to our confession. We reveal our sins to God Himself and, together with the priest, ask Him for forgiveness.

After telling the priest everything we have done, said, or thought that was sinful, and after hearing his counsel, the penitent kneels. The priest places the epitachelion over the

person's head and reads the prayer of absolution, by which, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, he forgives all sins. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, these sins are washed away from the soul, as though they had never been.

All Christians should approach the sacrament of Repentance before receiving Holy Communion, and also whenever their conscience accuses them of any sins. Children, as soon as they begin to understand their wrongful actions, must likewise confess before receiving Communion.

On the Anointing of the Sick

Closely related to the sacrament of Repentance is the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, also called Holy Unction. It is administered to the sick and, once a year on Great Wednesday, to all the faithful. In this sacrament, by invisible grace, sins are forgiven and illnesses of soul and body are relieved and healed.

The order of the sacrament is as follows: first the oil is blessed, and then the sick person—and all those present during the service—are anointed with this holy oil. Before the anointing, passages from the Epistles and the Gospel are read, along with special prayers. If possible, this sacred rite is celebrated by several priests (traditionally seven), and for this reason it is also called “Soboruvannia” (a conciliar service).

On Holy Orders

The sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion, Repentance, and Anointing of the Sick concern the life of every Christian. In addition to these, two other sacraments bless a person's entrance into a particular state of life.

The sacrament of Holy Orders is administered to a man who becomes a clergyman and receives special grace to celebrate the divine services and the sacraments for others.

There are three ranks of clergy. The highest rank is that of bishop. Bishops are successors of the apostles; they govern the Church and may celebrate all the sacraments. Depending on the office he holds and the territory he governs, a bishop may be called a bishop, archbishop, metropolitan, or patriarch, but these are different titles of the same episcopal rank.

The second rank is that of priest, who may celebrate all the sacraments except Holy Orders. The lowest rank is that of deacon, who does not celebrate the sacraments independently but assists the priest in their celebration.

During the sacrament of Holy Orders, the bishop, at the Divine Liturgy, lays his hands upon the head of the candidate and reads a special prayer. The one ordained is then vested in the garments

proper to his rank. Clergy dedicate their entire lives to the service of God and of people. They have received grace through the apostles from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and we must always treat them with special love and respect.

On Marriage

Marriage is a sacrament in which a man and a woman are blessed when they become husband and wife and establish a Christian family. The priest invokes God's blessing three times. During the sacrament, the bride and groom stand holding lighted candles, and crowns are placed upon their heads.

Christian marriage is holy; therefore, divorce is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances—when marital fidelity has been violated.

